



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

February 23, 1989

Mr. Salem Azzam
Secretary General
Islamic Council
16 Grosvenor Crescent
London SW17EP UK

Dear Mr. Azzam:

Thank you for your letter of January 30 to President Bush on the situation in Afghanistan.

The United States commitment to the Afghan cause remains firm. We are confident that the goal of self-determination for the Afghan people will soon be realized. The illegitimate Kabul regime cannot long survive now that the Soviet troops have departed.

I have enclosed a statement President Bush released recently on the occasion of the completion of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. I know you will be pleased to see that the President shares your goals for a peaceful, independent and free Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert A. Flaten", written over a horizontal line.

Robert A. Flaten
Director
Office of Pakistan, Afghanistan,
and Bangladesh Affairs

Enclosure:

As stated.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

February 16, 1989

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Today marks the start of a new chapter in the history of Afghanistan. For the first time in over nine years, Soviet forces no longer occupy that country. This development marks an extraordinary triumph of spirit and will by the Afghan people, and we salute them for it.

Much remains to be done, however. For the Afghan people, the struggle for self-determination goes on. We support Afghan efforts to fashion a stable, broadly-based government responsive to the needs of the Afghan people. We call upon Afghan Resistance leaders to work together towards this end. As long as the Resistance struggle for self-determination continues, so too will America's support.

Throughout the long dark years of Afghanistan's occupation, the international community has been steadfast in its support of the Afghan cause. This is also true for the United States. U.S. support for the Afghan people and the subsequent Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan constitute a powerful example of what we Americans can accomplish when executive and Congress, Republican and Democrat, stand together. The government and people of Pakistan also can take particular satisfaction from this event; their courage and solidarity contributed significantly to the Afghan struggle.

Now, more than ever, the Afghan people deserve the continuing help of the international community as they begin the difficult process of reclaiming their country, resettling their people, and restoring their livelihood. The commitment of the United States to the Afghan people will remain firm -- both through our bilateral humanitarian aid program and through United Nations efforts to remove mines, resettle refugees, and reconstruct Afghanistan's war-torn economy. We call upon other nations to contribute all they can and hope that the United Nations and the Resistance can come to mutually acceptable arrangements for the nationwide distribution of needed food supplies.

The Soviet Union has now fulfilled its obligation to withdraw from Afghanistan. We welcome that decision. We call upon the Soviet Union to refrain from other forms of interference in Afghan affairs. The Soviet Union has nothing to fear from the establishment of an independent, non-aligned Afghanistan. At the same time, the USSR bears special responsibility for healing the wounds of this war, and we call upon it to support generously international efforts to rebuild Afghanistan.